

## ***Testimony before the House Education Committee***

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### **Education Trust -Midwest**

**The Education Trust-Midwest** works for the high academic achievement of all students at all levels, pre-kindergarten through college. Our goal is to close the gaps in opportunity and achievement for all Michigan students, particularly those from low-income families or who are African American, Latino or American Indian, in Michigan and beyond.

**Education Trust-Midwest is opposed to the current drafts of House Bill's 4465 and 4466 as currently before this committee.**

***We know*** that closing the gaps and raising educational achievement for all students doesn't leave anything about teaching and learning to chance.

***We know*** to close gaps and raise educational achievement we set our goals high.

And, ***we know*** that higher performing secondary schools put all kids - not just some - in a demanding high school core curriculum.

***House Bill 4465 goes against everything we know.***

(Point 1) Page 2, Lines 14 - 24, The proposed change eliminates flexibility within the current law. Being eliminated is the recently passed Rep. Sheltron language that allowed a CTE student flexibility to earn math credit as part of the MI Merit Curriculum if they complete a Department approved career technical course that has embedded mathematics. Examples of such courses are part of current law. Many testifying before this committee seek credit for an alternative method to teach higher math skills. Yet, the bill before you removes the flexibility they seek.

In its place new language in HB 4465 lowers the expectations of the MMC. The proposed new language allows any student completing any CTE course

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will meet the the rigorous math requirements of the MMC. Any CTE course whether approved, or, not.

ETM has research, and Michigan has experience that *our students do better when* high expectations are set for them. This amendment sends our children back to a pathway of low expectations.

( Point\_2) On Page 5, line 17, This wording eliminates any expectation for the legislature to set statewide standards and expect local schools to meet them; it eliminates any validity of comparative data, and puts high expectations to chance. The proposed language states *ANY content CTE expectations developed by the school district will determine credit*. If allowed, Michigan has just taken a giant step backward, away from being able to fairly compare school programs, school buildings, and school districts.

(Point 3) Nine states and the District of Columbia have set *mandatory course requirements without* opt-out provisions. Fourteen states require students to automatically enroll in a "default" college-and career ready curriculum but allow them to opt out of some of the requirements if their parents sign a waiver. *In Michigan students may "choose" to take another math course, such as statistics, or a math embedded CTE course but still keeping rigor*.

HB 4465, Page 2, Lines 14 - 24, puts in place a less rigorous course selection alternative that allows school officials, or students a pathway to lower expectations without permission of their parents. **The Education Trust-Midwest is strongly opposed to parents being removed from this decision.**

Michigan's "opt-out" requires a parent approved personal curriculum, that if met, will allow the student to receive a high school diploma no different than those completing the default MMC..

*Michigan is unique in allowing a parent approved curriculum to equal the default college/career ready curriculum.*

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The State of Arkansas has a default college/career ready curriculum that is similar to Michigan's. Arkansas labels their default curriculum the *Smart Curriculum*.

To opt-out of *The Smart Curriculum*, the parent must sign a waiver that states: By signing this Smart Core Waiver Form, you are waiving your student's right to Smart Core and are placing him or her in the Common Core Curriculum. And, your student will not receive the Smart Core high school diploma or be eligible for the state sponsored post-high school scholarship.

Arkansas has two high school diplomas - A *Smart Core*, and *Core Curriculum diploma*. **A two track diploma system is something Michigan educators, parents, and ETM have strongly opposed.** We have history that two diplomas just widens the gap.

(Point 4) ETM continues to support that instruction in a second language is important. Legislative guidance is needed as to where the "language other than English" credit is to be earned. History demonstrates that the earlier a child receives this instruction the more beneficial it is to their over-all academic success.

**HB 4466 is important for it provides an avenue to answer the frustrations of current practice brought before the committee. Concern has centered around two complaints:**

Complaint #1: High skill, math embedded CTE programs are not given enough flexibility to meet algebra II expectations.

Complaint #2: Because of lack of resources and few course schedule options a small 100-500 student high school does not have the flexibility to meet MMC requirements, especially with the additional language requirements.

Possible Fix for Flexibility: On page 8, line 19, Current law says a math embedded CTE class "must contain 1 semester of algebra II." This conflicts with the flexibility allowed in the Sheltron, math embedded, CTE programs, amendment. If this line were to read ... *completes that content of algebra II benchmarks assessed in the MI Merit Exam* the intent of the current law

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would be met and CTE students in the programs named in the Rep. Sheltron amendment will meet the MMC requirement.

Possible Fix for More Options: ETM agrees, small high schools have limited resources. ETM believes a possible resolution of this can be found starting on page 8, line 24, and continuing on to page 9, line 24. Here are little used, already legislatively agreed to, modifications of up to three credits. Required MMC credits in visual arts, performing arts, applied arts, health and physical education, and one social studies credit may be modified. It's in the current law. The approved modifications are allowed "if additional course work is taken in either English language arts, mathematics, or science, or 1 additional credit in a language other than English." We suggest that completion of an approved CTE program be added to this list allowing a modification. This will allow a student up to three (3) credits that can be modified thus giving smaller high school course schedules, and their students, flexibility.

**(Closing)** Both common sense and academic research tell us that students who are challenged more in school will be better prepared upon high school graduation, whether for post high school career training or for college. Michigan has made a series of reforms in the past decade to strengthen standards. That started with replacing a low-level high school exam with the ACT, and adding the career ready measurement WorkKeys; it continued when Michigan adopted the MI Merit Curriculum for high school students. But adoption of these policies is not enough. All students, rather than just some, need their coursework to align with demands of the future and state expectations.

**Education Trust-Midwest believes HB's 4465 and 4466, as before this committee, are a step backward for Michigan's students.**